News release

Decision made on future of Met Office centres

31 January 2006

Don Touhig MP, the Under Secretary of State for Defence and the Minister responsible for the Met Office, has today announced in Parliament a major change to the way the majority of Met Office forecasts will be produced.

The decision is to:

- concentrate most non-military weather forecast production in Exeter and Aberdeen
- invest in regional Met Office advisers, who will develop business relationships with existing and new public and commercial customers around the UK
- remove the production of weather forecasts from the Met Offices at London, Belfast, Manchester, Birmingham and Cardiff

This decision, which does not affect the Met Offices at military locations, follows an extensive consultation period, during which representations from anyone who has an interest in the decision - including customers, the Trades Union and MPs - have been made to the Minister.

Don Touhig said "This decision will ensure that the Met Office continues to provide an excellent service to all of its customers and the country at large. It is very important that the Met Office, as the national weather service for the UK, provides its services to customers in a way that reduces costs to the taxpayer in the long-term".

Met Office Chief Executive Mark Hutchinson, said "Investment in the new Exeter headquarters and other related technology – such as our massive supercomputing power – has considerably improved our forecasting capability in recent years and allowed us to produce weather forecasts for any part of the UK from a central location.

"These changes will maintain quality of services while introducing flexibility and importantly helping drive down costs to our customers for the future".

The Met Office will now be working with stakeholders, staff and customers to implement the decision and to ensure that the process is carried forward as efficiently as possible.

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